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STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

At the 3753rd meeting of the Security Council, held on 19 March 1997 in connection with the Council's consideration of the item entitled "The situation in Croatia", the President of the Security Council made the following statement on behalf of the Council:

"The Security Council has considered the report of the Secretary-General of 5 March 1997 (S/1997/195) on Croatia, submitted pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1009 (1995) and 1019 (1995). It also recalls the statement by its President of 20 December 1996 (S/PRST/1996/48).

"The Security Council remains deeply concerned that, although the Government of Croatia maintains that it has deployed the necessary number of police officers, Croatian Serbs continue to live in conditions of serious insecurity throughout the areas which had been designated United Nations Protected Areas (UNPAs) and were known as Sectors West, North and South, particularly in the area of former Sector South around Knin. It calls upon the Government of Croatia to take further steps to restore a climate of law and order in those areas.

"The Security Council welcomes the fact that difficult living conditions for remaining Serbs have been considerably eased during recent months by intensive humanitarian programmes conducted by international organizations. In this context, it calls upon the Government of Croatia to assume fully its responsibilities, in cooperation with all relevant international organizations, to ensure that the social and economic situation of all inhabitants in the former Sectors improves.

"The Security Council expresses its concern that there continues to be little progress with regard to the return of Croatian Serb displaced persons and refugees to the areas. It calls upon the Government of Croatia to accelerate its efforts to improve conditions of personal and economic security, to remove bureaucratic obstacles to the rapid issue of documentation to all Serb families and to resolve promptly the property issue, by a return of property or just compensation, in order to facilitate the return of Croatian Serbs to the former sectors.

"The Security Council calls upon the Government of Croatia to remove uncertainty about the implementation of its amnesty law, in particular by finalizing without delay the list of war crime suspects on the basis of existing evidence and in strict accordance with international law, and to put an end to arbitrary arrests, particularly of Serbs returning to Croatia.

"The Security Council recalls the obligations of Croatia arising from relevant universal human rights instruments to which it is a party. It welcomes the commitments undertaken by the Government of Croatia in relation to the Council of Europe, including its signature of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and expects that the Government of Croatia will implement those commitments fully.

"The Security Council is concerned that the Government of Croatia continues to withhold its full cooperation with the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. It underlines the obligation of the Government of Croatia in accordance with resolution 827 (1993) to respond promptly and in full to all requests from the International Tribunal. It also calls upon the Government of Croatia to conduct investigations into and the prosecution of persons accused of serious violations of international humanitarian law, especially those committed in the course of military operations in 1995.

"The Security Council stresses the importance of the effective implementation of the measures outlined in the paragraphs above for promoting confidence and reconciliation in Croatia as well as for the peaceful reintegration of the Region of Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium. In this context, the Council requests the Secretary-General to continue to keep it informed on a regular basis and to report again on the humanitarian and human rights situation in Croatia within his report to be submitted by 1 July 1997 as referred to in paragraph 6 of resolution 1079 (1996)."